

SPRING 2019



NEWSLETTER

WEBINARS

Red Squirrels United is creating a series of webinars on red squirrel conservation and grey squirrel management. Here are details of those available and upcoming:

Managing grey squirrels for woodland management, Charles Dutton, Pryor & Rickett Silviculture and European Squirrel Initiative:
www.vimeo.com/332211722

Optimising forestry management for red squirrels, Louise de Raad, University of the Highlands and Islands:
www.vimeo.com/312123605

Optimising social media for red squirrel conservation, Gillian Hatcher, Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels:
www.vimeo.com/335098577

Future webinars:

22 May, Dr Craig Shuttleworth discusses using captive breeding to restore pine marten populations.

CREATING A NEW UKSA WEBSITE

The new **UK Squirrel Accord website** currently being built and designed will be launched this summer, retaining the same web address: www.squirrelaccord.uk

We are keen to promote key resources from a variety of stakeholders that are relevant to UKSA's aims:

- ▶ Securing & expanding red squirrel populations
- ▶ Ensuring we have healthy woodlands for the future

The searchable **resources library** will act as a hub to upload UKSA documents and direct users, via live links, to the websites and documents of stakeholders - helping to promote cross-sector research, best practice, position statements, strategies, publications, etc., on red squirrel conservation and grey squirrel management.

The website will also have a searchable **image gallery**, with images free-to-use if credited to the individual or organisation. Images will include healthy and infected red squirrels, conservation tools (e.g. feeders, nest boxes, etc.), grey squirrels, bark stripping damage, healthy trees, people in action (e.g. volunteers carrying out monitoring and land managers carrying out conservation or forestry operations).

If you can **help with web links to key documents/resources or images** you are willing to share, please contact: info@squirrelaccord.uk

INVASIVE SPECIES WEEK, 13-17 MAY

During **Invasive Species Week** organisations across the UK, Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man work together to raise awareness and ask everyone to help prevent their spread to protect the environment and recreational spaces for future generations to enjoy.

In the UK, grey squirrels are classed as invasive non-native species because they were intentionally introduced to locations in England and Ireland, areas outside their natural range, by humans and have negative impacts on native species, habitats and the economy. Join UKSA in sharing impacts of grey squirrels through social media. Twitter: [@SquirrelAccord](https://twitter.com/SquirrelAccord) [#InvasivesWeek](https://twitter.com/InvasivesWeek)

NEW PROTOCOL

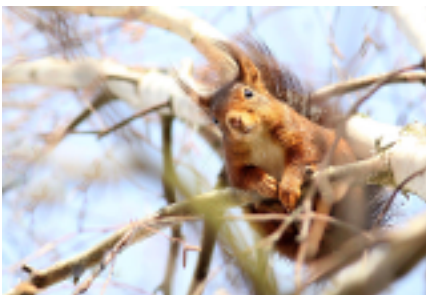
UKSA's Red Squirrel Conservation Subcommittee has created a new Protocol for red squirrel, *Sciurus vulgaris*, captive breeding, public enclosures, and release programmes in the UK .

It is a voluntary code of good practice to support co-ordinated, well-managed breeding and reintroduction programmes that aims to establish the highest possible standards of:

- welfare
- biosecurity
- record keeping
- genetic health
- disease risk management
- success in supporting the recovery of wild self-sustaining red squirrel populations.

The protocol includes use of the stud book maintained by the Welsh Mountain Zoo / National Zoological Society of Wales, DNA testing, micro-chipping, squirrel welfare, and advice for public display enclosures.

The protocol will be available on the new UKSA website once launched. Until then please contact info@squirrelaccord.uk for a copy.



FERTILITY CONTROL RESEARCH



Research into a fertility control for grey squirrels is in the second year of the five-year project. The study aims to produce an immunocontraceptive that can be orally taken by grey squirrels through a species-specific delivery mechanism.

Results from the Animal Plant Health Health Agency (APHA) show that an orally delivered contraceptive was effective in reducing reproduction in rats. APHA will move to testing the contraceptive for effectiveness on grey squirrels.

Tests on a hopper to deliver the oral contraceptive to grey squirrels only are going well. The test bait, without contraceptives, is attractive to grey squirrels and the hopper currently prevents almost all but the very largest red squirrels from accessing it. Further work will now be done to assess the amount of bait eaten per visit, monitor bait uptake in areas with different squirrel densities and refine the hopper to minimise potential bait uptake by non-target species.

The research is also creating a model to predict grey squirrel densities in woodlands to guide management efforts, their rate of reinvasion to areas if management stops and how large a buffer needs to be to prevent reinvasion.

UKSA is fundraising for the fertility research and has succeeded in raising £837,000. To complete the research, a further £250,000 needs to be secured. If you are interested in supporting this important work please contact info@squirrelaccord.uk

Frequently asked questions can be found on the UK Squirrel Accord website: <http://squirrelaccord.uk/assets/apha--uksa-fertility-control---faqs-v4.0-.pdf>

A presentation on progress with the hopper can be found here: www.redsquirrels.united.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Oral-contraceptive.pdf

TURNING THE TIDE - SHORT FILM

Turning the Tide was recently shown to attendees of the fascinating Red Squirrel South West conference. The short film, four minutes long, looks at impacts of grey squirrels on red squirrels, trees and other biodiversity, and may be of interest:

<https://vimeo.com/326143490>

EAC INQUIRY

The Government's **Environmental Audit Committee** has launched an **inquiry into the impacts of invasive species** and their management. The UK Squirrel Accord has submitted a written response highlighting the following issues:

Grey squirrels have negative impacts on tree and woodland health and survival, native red squirrel populations, biodiversity and timber production, and the ecosystem services that mature trees and woodlands provide.

Without management of grey squirrels, native red squirrels could become extinct in the UK.

In 2010, economic costs of grey squirrels to the UK economy were estimated at £14 million. The costs of grey squirrels to the timber trade over the next 150 years are estimated at £22.5 billion.

Grey squirrels are major obstacles to the planting and survival of broadleaf woodland. In 2014, a survey of Royal Forestry Society members highlighted grey squirrels as the greatest threat to broadleaf timber production, above the threats posed by tree diseases and deer.

One RFS member stated, "I replanted the major part of my woodlands in 1987 with 80% English oak. The bark stripping by grey squirrels over those 26 years has seriously damaged an estimated 40% to 50% of the crop, in many cases fatally."

As maturing oak trees provide food and habitat for many other species this has a subsequent effect on biodiversity.

RSU KNOWLEDGE FAIR 2019



The **Red Squirrels United Knowledge Fair 2019** was an excellent two-day event of talks and a visit to National Trust's Formby Point, which brought together volunteers, researchers and conservation staff from across the UK to cover a range of topics related to red squirrel conservation.

Presentations from various speakers looked at recruiting and retaining volunteers, research into a grey squirrel contraceptive, use of ground cameras and different traps, the social science of using lethal methods for wildlife management, laserfencing and shooting, managing squirrels at a landscape scale, and an update from UKSA. One of the highlights was a talk and practical demonstration on the use of conservation dogs to detect squirrel pox disease outbreaks.

The range of presentations and more images from the event are available online from RSU: <http://www.redsquirrelsunited.org.uk/2019-knowledge-fair/>

SSRS COMMUNITY HUB

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels has created a **Community Hub** for supporters and volunteers to keep up to date with the project and connect with others working to protect local red squirrel populations. Registered users can keep track of their squirrel sightings and join a local red squirrel network. SSRS volunteers can also use the Hub to access additional resources as well as submit and view data online.

Find out more and register here: <https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/community-hub/>